

Method of making a heating element of molybdenum silicide type.

The present invention relates to a method of manufacturing a 5 heating element of the molybdenum silicide type.

An electric resistance element of the molybdenum silicide type is described in Swedish Patent Specifications 0003512-1 and 0004329-9. According to patent specification 0003512-1 10 the resistance material of the heating element includes $Mo(Si_{1-x}Al_x)_2$ which is caused to contain aluminium to an extent at which the formation of pest is essentially prevented.

It has been found that when such material is operated in a 15 temperature range of 400 - 600°C no pest, or only a slight amount of pest, is formed. Pest is formed by virtue of the formation of MoO_3 from $MoSi_2$ and O_2 .

The reason why the formation of pest is significantly reduced 20 or is eliminated is due to the formation of Al_2O_3 , or a layer rich in Al_2O_3 , on the surface of the element

The other patent specification 0004329-9 teaches a method of increasing the useful life span of heating elements that 25 essentially consist of molybdenum silicide and alloys of this basic material when the element operates at high temperatures.

According to this patent specification, the heating element 30 is caused to contain aluminium to an extent which is sufficient to maintain a stable, slowly growing layer of aluminium oxide on the surface of the heating element.

According to one preferred embodiment the heating element material is caused to contain $Mo(Si_{1-x}Al_x)_2$, where x lies in the range of 0.2 - 0.6.

5 A material of the molybdenum silicide type that contains aluminium has been found to possess improved corrosion properties at both low and high temperatures.

Such material is often produced by mixing $MoSi_2$ powder with
10 oxidic raw material, such as aluminosilicates. When the raw material is bentonite clay, there is obtained a relatively low melting point which contributes towards so-called smelt phase sintering which results in dense materials that contains $MoSi_2$ and a proportion of aluminium silicate corre-
15 sponding to 15 - 20 percent by volume.

Bentonite clay containing chiefly SiO_2 can be used in the production of heating elements containing $Mo(Si_{1-x}Al_x)_2$. When sintering with an Al-alloyed silicide there takes place a
20 chemical exchange reaction in which the greater affinity of the oxygen to Al than to Si results in Si leaving the aluminium silicate and entering the silicide as a result of Al leaving the silicide and being sucked up by the oxide phase. This exchange reaction also contributes towards improved
25 sintering properties of the composite material. The final material contains $Mo(Si_{1-x}Al_x)_2$ that is substantially deplete of Al, where the oxide phase contains Al_2O_3 in all essentials.

The standard procedure of manufacture involves mixing molybdenum, silicon and aluminium in powder form and firing the
30 powder mix normally under a shielding gas atmosphere. This results in a cake of the material $Mo(Si_{1-y}Al_y)_2$, where y is larger than x in the above formula as a result of said ex-

change reaction. The reaction is exothermic. The cake is then crushed and ground down to a fine particle size normally in the order of 1 - 20 μ m. This powder is mixed with bentonite clay such as to form a wet ceramic material. The material is 5 extruded and dried to a rod form whose diameter corresponds to the diameter of the subsequent heating element. The material is then sintered at a temperature that exceeds the smelting temperature of the bentonite component.

10 However, there is a drawback with an element of this kind. The problem is that the oxide that forms on the surface of the element, namely Al₂O₃; sometimes, peels away or flakes off, i.e. loosens from the surface of the element in cyclic operation.

15 A peeling oxide gives poorer protection against continued oxidation of aluminium which becomes impoverished in the outer surface of the element more quickly. Moreover, oxide peelings can contaminate the oven in which the element is 20 fitted, with the risk that performance and the appearance of products heat treated in ovens that have such elements will be significantly impaired. This thus restricts the use of such elements in heating processes.

25 This problem is solved by the solution taught in each of the two Swedish Patent Specifications 0201042-9 and 0201043-7.

Swedish Patent Specification 0201042-9 teaches a method of producing a heating element that comprises substantially of 30 molybdenum silicide and alloys of this basic material. The method is characterised by producing a material that contains chiefly Mo(Si_{1-x}Al_x)₂ and Al₂O₃ by mixing molybdenum alumini-

nosilicide $(Mo(Si_{1-y}Al_y)_2)$ with SiO_2 , where the SiO_2 is at least 98% pure.

Swedish Patent Specification 0201043-7 teaches the production 5 of a corresponding material, where bentonite clay is used to add silicon dioxide and aluminium oxide. The bentonite clay shall have a contaminating substance content of less than 2000ppm.

10 It has been found surprisingly that there is obtained at low contaminant consistencies an oxide which does not peel after cyclic operation between room temperature and high temperatures, for instance 1500°C. The present invention is based on the insight that such a pure aluminium-oxide building molybdenum silicide material can be produced beneficially by beginning partly with other material and compounds than those 15 given above.

20 The present method of production of a heating element that is comprised essentially of molybdenum silicide and its alloys includes the step of producing a material that contains essentially $Mo(Si_{1-x}Al_x)_2$ and Al_2O_3 by mixing a mixture of silicon and molybdenum compound with an aluminium compound.

25 According to the invention silicon and the molybdenum compound include $Mo(Si_{1-y}Al_y)_2$ and are mixed with either an aluminium compound consisting of Al_2O_3 or $Al(OH)_3$, and are optionally mixed with one or more of the compounds SiO_2 , Si and MoO_3 .

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According to a second embodiment, silicon and the molybdenum compound contain MoO_3 and Al and Si and/or SiO_2 .

According to the invention the input components together have a degree of purity of at least 98%.

According to a preferred embodiment of the invention the 5 input components have a degree of purity of at least 99%.

The mixture is caused to react exothermically and/or by being sintered so that exchange reactions take place, to form the compounds $Mo(Si_{1-x}Al_x)_2$ and Al_2O_3 , where x is caused to lie in 10 the range of 0.4 - 0.6.

There is obtained by this method an element material that is aluminium oxide building and whose aluminium oxide layers will not peel or flake; which was mentioned as a problem in 15 the beginning of this document.

According to one preferred embodiment x is caused to lie in the range of 0.45 - 0.55.

20 According to one preferred embodiment the SiO_2 is included in silicates, where remaining substances in the silicate have properties that molybdenum silicide is unable to alloy with said substance or substances and have such properties that the symmetry of the crystal lattice of the molybdenum silicide is retained.

25 It is possible to substitute molybdenum partly with Re, W or Nb in the material $Mo(Si_{1-x}Al_x)_2$ without changing the symmetry of the crystal lattice.

30 Molybdenum can be replaced with tungsten (W) by an amount corresponding approximately to one third.

According to one preferred embodiment one or more of the following sintering auxiliaries MgO, CaO, SiO₂ and Y₂O₃ is/are caused to be added to the mixture.

- 5 The present invention thus solves the problem mentioned in the introduction and enables the present element to be used beneficially in ovens without detriment to the material treated in the oven.
- 10 The present invention shall not be considered to be limited to the aforescribed embodiments, since variations can be made within the scope of the accompanying claims.